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From the Chair

This is the second issue of the *Philosophy/Philosophy, Politics and Law Newsletter*. It features two of the Department's faculty (Anthony (Tony) Preus, one of our senior faculty, and Christopher Knapp, one of our junior faculty).

We had a sad year. Professor Vito Sinisi retired in December 2004 and Professor Martin (Mike) Dillon died unexpectedly in March 2005. We recognize both.

We had a good year in terms of course offerings. We added several new courses, including a course on Asian Philosophy at the introductory level (PHIL 105) that is offered by our specialist in Asian Philosophy, Charles Goodman, and a course in the Philosophy of Mind (PHIL 436) that is offered by our specialist in Philosophy of Mind, Eric Dietrich. We are adding to and changing the curriculum in other exciting ways, for example developing an interdisciplinary track in social thought that will show up in next year's (2005-2006) Binghamton University *Bulletin*.

We had an external review this year. We wrote a self-study for it last academic year and this year had external reviewers conduct a peer review. This was an excellent experience and we received both acknowledgments for our successes as a department and wonderful comments that will help us continue with our efforts to change and grow.

For more information about the Department please look at our website at <http://philosophy.binghamton.edu>. For information about Philosophy, Politics and Law (PPL) please look at <http://ppl.binghamton.edu>.

The newsletter has a dedicated space for news from Philosophy and PPL alumni. We are all looking forward to hearing from you.

Bat-Ami Bar On





Professor Martin (Mike) Conboy Dillon died of a heart attack on March 10 in Verbier, Switzerland. He was born on Dec. 7, 1938 in Van Nuys, CA. He received his BA from the University of Virginia in 1960, his MA from U.C. Berkeley in 1964, an MPhil from Yale in 1968 and a PhD from Yale in 1970. He served in the United States Navy on active and reserve duty from 1960 to 1983, retiring as Captain. Dillon was a Distinguished Teaching Professor of Philosophy at Binghamton University and taught in the philosophy department since 1968. He specialized in Continental Philosophy, Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy. He authored several books including *Merleau-Ponty's Ontology* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1988, 2nd edition 1998), *Semiological Reductionism: A Critique of the Deconstructionist Movement in Postmodern Thought* (Albany: SUNY, 1995), and *Beyond Romance* (Albany: SUNY, 2001). He is the editor of *Merleau-Ponty Vivant* (Albany: SUNY, 1991), and *Écart & Difference: Merleau-Ponty and Derrida on Seeing and Writing* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1996). He has fifty articles in various scholarly journals and was at work on three books whose working titles are *Art, Truth, and Illusion: Nietzsche's Ontology* and *The Ethics of Particularity* and a novel, *The Powerjuice Agon*. He was a founding member and currently the general secretary of The Merleau-Ponty Circle. He was a member of several organizations, including the International Association for Philosophy and Literature, the American Philosophical Association, the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy, the New York State Philosophical Association (Creighton Club), the Society for the Philosophy of Sex and Love and the Canadian Society for Hermeneutics and Postmodern Thought. Dillon is survived by his wife, Joanne (Joey) Dillon; three daughters, Kathleen Carroll of Ridgewood, NJ; Elizabeth of Geneva, Switzerland; Sarah of Boulder, CO; a sister, R. Kathleen Dillon of Brooklyn, NY; and two grandsons, Dillon & Peyton Carroll of Ridgewood, NJ. The family hosted an open house to commemorate Mike Dillon on March 19. The Department of Philosophy commemorated Mike Dillon on April 7. The Department is also beginning a memorial fund.

[“Mike was one of the great professors! We miss him terribly.”—Karen Levene, donor, Memorial Scholarship](#)

“Dillon came to the world and left it a better place than it was when he found it, he improved life by teaching it, but most of all by living it. Let the honor of his memory not die with his teachings, live the life that he advocated and honor the influence he has had on each of you through your own example, through your own deeds. This is surely a time of sadness, but Dillon himself would have wanted us not to mourn death, but to rise above it and celebrate life.” --An excerpt from a eulogy given by graduate student Roberto Ruiz, at the department commemoration.

For articles, please see: http://www.bupipedream.com/display_article.php?id=2295
<http://inside.binghamton.edu/default.cgi?issue=2005apr07>



Professor Wins Excellence in Teaching Award

Steven P. Scalet is “committed to the idea that education is not essentially about ideas but about people.” His commitment to people permeates every letter in support of his nomination. One colleague states that he “exemplifies the qualities of a great teacher...He knows his subject, he can convey it to others he is excited to do so and he is capable of inspiring students and alumni.” Others commend him for “infectious enthusiasm,” the “life he brings into his classes” and “dedication to his students.” He is director of the graduate program in Philosophy, Politics and Law, and has developed, implemented and served as director of the department program that connects the undergraduate major with the graduate program in social, political, ethical and legal philosophy. Scalet conducts a year-long undergraduate Honors Program that culminates in an academic conference for participants, serves on the Human Subjects Research Review Committee and has successfully run the Philosophy Department’s Colloquium series. He participates in pre-law panel discussions, lectures and luncheons and is a Hinman Fellow and a Visiting Fellow in College-in-the-Woods. He has been published eight times and has given more than a dozen professional presentations. Steven received his BA in philosophy and economics from Franklin and Marshall College and, from the University of Arizona, two Master’s (philosophy and economics) and a PhD in Philosophy.



Department Remembers Late BU Student

Keith Nintzel, a native of Sayville, New York, died from internal injuries resulting from a car accident while driving back to Binghamton after the Thanksgiving break. He declared Philosophy as his major in September 2004 after taking several courses in Philosophy beginning in spring 2002. He was in his senior year and expected to graduate in May 2005. Keith was fluent in German, having spent a year abroad in Austria, and well grounded in Nietzsche. He was going through a new collection of Nietzsche's *Werke* and collecting and translating material from the unpublished writings that were relevant to themes such as eternal recurrence, truth, and art. In honor of his memory, the senior class is dedicating a plaque with Keith’s name on it, which will be displayed in the Memorial Courtyard.



Professor Retires after 38 Years

Professor Vito Sinisi retired in 2004 after 38 years of service. He received his BA from Harvard in 1950, his MA from UC Berkeley in 1954, and his PhD also from UC Berkeley in 1959. He began teaching at Binghamton in 1966. He chaired the department on two occasions, between 1968 and 1971, and 1989 and 1990. Vito was a Master of Hinman College from 1973-1981, and he taught Logic and Social Philosophy courses. He is the author of *Applied Logic* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2000), and the editor of *The Heritage of Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz* (Amsterdam-Atlanta, GA: Rodopi 1995). He is also the author of thirteen articles.



Featured Faculty

Anthony Preus



Professor Anthony Preus became a member of the philosophy department in 1964. He earned his MA from Oxford, and PhD from Johns Hopkins. In addition to being the philosophy department's only Faculty Master of College in the Woods, he is also the secretary of Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy and a member of the International Society for Neoplatonic Studies. Having been a professor for several decades, Tony has received many honors, including the Woodrow Wilson Fellow and Fels Fellow awards, as well as the National Endowment for the Humanities Fellow honor. A Rhodes Scholar, he teaches classes in the history of philosophy, specifically on Plato and Aristotle, as well as in Medical Ethics. His areas of interest also include Ancient Greek Science. Outside the university, Tony is an avid hiker. A member of the Triple Cities Hiking club since 1996, Tony has often led them to the Finger Lakes Trail, for which he has

written several guidebooks.

Christopher Knapp



Christopher Knapp joined the department in the fall of 2001, after receiving his PhD degree from Rutgers University. His research interests are in ethics – particularly environmental ethics, the theory of value, and the relationship between empirical psychology and philosophical accounts of moral thought and action. Currently, he is working on several articles that investigate the moral difficulties posed by vagueness. Two of these articles deal with the implications of vagueness for theories of the moral standing of both humans and non-humans. Two other articles deal with the theoretical and practical problems vagueness raises for our practice comparing the value of an option to the alternatives.

Professor Knapp regularly teaches an introductory lecture course in environmental ethics and upper-level seminars that deal with ethics and public policy. One recent seminar “Autonomy and the Law” was dedicated to understanding whether it is legitimate for governments to use their power for the purpose of making their citizens better people. Another, “The Ethics of Cost-Benefit Analysis” analyzed the moral prospects and problems of using cost-benefit analysis as a tool for deciding what environmental policies to pursue.

In all of his seminars, Professor Knapp encourages his students to not only learn what other philosophers have written, but also to develop and defend their own philosophical positions. He likes to describe these seminars as being similar to courses in studio art, in which students learn about art not only by studying examples of excellent works, but by creating art themselves. By asking students to construct their own philosophical theses, and then to present and argue for them in their papers, he hopes that they will come understand both the philosophy they read and their own views more deeply.

CONGRATULATIONS

SPEL PhD: Christal Frakes defended her dissertation in the fall of 2004 entitled “The Virtue of Compassion: Responding to Suffering with Equanimity.” She is also the recipient of the Dissertation Excellence Award.

3/2 STUDENTS: Margot Freedman, Sheeba Koshy, Aaron Messing and Roberto Ruiz for completing their Philosophy MA.

FACULTY & STAFF: The Philosophy department would like to extend congratulations to Melanie Yaworski for twenty years of service at Binghamton University, Donald Weiss for thirty-five years, and Anthony Preus for forty years.



Junior Wins Prestigious Truman Scholarship, Chancellor's Award for Excellence

Ravi Gupta, who in addition to majoring in Philosophy also majors in Science and Public Policy, has been recognized with an honorable mention in the prestigious USA Today Academic All-Star competition. Judges look for those who excel not only in scholarship, but also in leadership roles on and off campus. In 2004, Gupta received a \$26,000 scholarship from the Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation. One of only 77 winners selected from among 609 candidates, he was chosen on the basis of leadership potential, intellectual ability and likelihood of "making a difference." Gupta has taught English and science to children in Ghana while raising money to build a school there. He founded Binghamton Students for Students International, a Student Association-chartered group that raises awareness and funds for students in third-world countries; and Atuu International, a New York state registered charity that raises scholarship funds for students in Ghana. Gupta has also served as a teaching assistant, as captain of the debate team, a volunteer for Red Cross blood drives and a tutor through the Center for Academic Excellence, donating all his wages to Atuu International. Ravi is also the recipient of the Chancellor's Award for Student Excellence. He and eight other Binghamton University students were honored at a ceremony at the Empire State Convention Center in Albany on March 28.



Student Wins 2004 – 2005 Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship

Matthew Gervais, a sophomore double majoring in Philosophy and Psychobiology, as well as minoring in anthropology is among the 310 winners from 1,113 nominees nationwide for the 2004-2005 Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship, the premier national award for undergraduate science, mathematics and engineering students. Gervais received an Undergraduate Research Award to study the evolution and causes of laughter by synthesizing existing theories and research from across several disciplines. His work continues as an independent study with Prof. David Sloan Wilson. Gervais is a member of Phi Beta Kappa and the Golden Key National Honor Society and has made the Dean's List every semester.

Faculty Publications and Presentations

Professor Anthony Preus: "Major Trends in Greek Philosophy in the United States, 1953-2003" *Greek Philosophy in the New Millenium: Essays in Honour of Thomas M. Robinson*, August 2004, 75-88

Professor Eric Dietrich: *Sisyphus's Boulder: Consciousness and the Limits of the Knowable*, (John Benjamins, November 2004).

Professor Christopher Knapp: "When Hard Choices Become Easy," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 41, Number 4 (October 2004).

Professor Jeffner Allen: "Silver Iguana: The Living-Dead of Bonaire Reef Communities," ISISA VIII International Conference, National Taiwan University, November 2004; "Pixelated Philosophy: Entanglements of Planetarity," International Society for African Philosophy and Studies, Brigard Memorial Seminary, Enugu, Nigeria, March 2005.

Professor Bat-Ami Bar On: "Politics and the Prioritization of Evil," *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy* 19/4 (2004); "Just (Decent? Mere?) War," in *Feminist Interventions in Ethics and Politics: Feminist Ethics and Social Theory*, ed. Barbara S. Andrew, Jean Clare Keller, and Lisa H. Schwartzman, (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005).



Faculty Publications and Presentations

Professor Charles Goodman: "The Treasure of Metaphysics and the Physical World," in *The Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 54 No. 216, July 2004.

Professor Max Pensky: *Globalizing Critical Theory*, Rowman and Littlefield, 2005 (edited); *Old Europe, New Europe, Core Europe: Transatlantic Relations in the Wake of the Iraq War* (edited with John Torpey and Daniel Levy), Verso, 2005; Jürgen Habermas, *Time of Transitions: Political Essays*, edited, translated, and with an introduction by Max Pensky and Ciarin Cronin, Polity Press, 2005; "Dreamtime, Memory, Destruction: Walter Benjamin's Urban Renewal," in *Cities*, 2005; "Natural History: the Life and Afterlife of a Concept in Adorno," *Critical Horizons*, Vol. 2:5, 2005.

Professor John Arthur: "Impartial Public Reason and Its Critics" in *Philosophy and its Public Role: St. Andrews Studies in Philosophy and Public Affairs* ed. W. Aiken and J. Haldane (Imprint Academic, 2005); "Institutional Racism and Equal Protection" in *APA Newsletter in Philosophy of Law* Vol. 4 No. 1, ed. T. Bendit (American Philosophical Association, 2005); *Morality and Moral Controversies: Readings in Moral, Social and Political Philosophy*, 7th ed. (Prentice-Hall, 2005).

Professor Melissa Zinkin: "Kant's Argument in the Amphiboly," 10th International Kant Congress, São Paulo, Brazil, October, 2005; "Space and Teleological Judgment in Kant's Critique of Pure Reason," American Society for Aesthetics, Philadelphia, PA, April, 2005; "Respect for the Law and the Use of Dynamical Terms in Kant's Theory of Moral Motivation," APA, Pacific Division, 2005.

Professor Lisa Tessman: *Burdened Virtues: Virtue Ethics for Liberatory Struggles*, Oxford University Press, 2005; "The Burdened Virtues of Political Resistance," *Feminist Interventions in Ethics and Politics*, eds. Barbara S. Andrew, Jean Clare Keller and Lisa H. Schwartzman. Rowman & Littlefield, 2005; Review of Christine Swanton's *Virtue Ethics: A Pluralistic Philosophical Review*, 114 (2).

From the PPL Program

I am happy to report that the PPL Program continues to flourish. The popularity of the major continues, so we have lots of majors. We have also instituted a Visiting Scholar program, and had a Philosopher named Bill Throop as a visitor for most of the fall. Bill was a guest lecturer and participant in seminars, and also gave an interesting paper entitled "The New Paradox of Wilderness Restoration: Public Virtue and Public Participation," which was presented to faculty and students at the SPEL Colloquium in November.

Another bit of news is that the PPL Program has taken the lead in addressing the problem of "grade inflation." Grades have been rising consistently in recent years, to the point where they are becoming less and less useful to employers and graduate schools. The College is looking at the issue and intends to make its own recommendations. But what we have done in PPL is to say, as a matter of policy, that the median grade for our large classes is a B-. We had a lively discussion about that policy, and about the meaning of grades themselves. Do they indicate how a student did relative to others in the class, or are they supposed to be some sort "objective" measure of quality? We tend to think of them in the former way, and so decided to experiment with the "grade norming" idea.

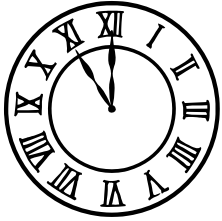
We had a close call when Steve Scalet was offered not one but two positions at other universities. One was a "chair" which brings a large salary and other perks. But thankfully, after a lot of arm-twisting, he decided to stay at Binghamton. Those of you who know Steve will appreciate what a significant contribution he makes to PPL, and what a blow it would have been to lose him. On the other hand, I think it speaks well of our Program that he decided he'd prefer to remain here.

We in the PPL Program wish you all the best. Don't hesitate to get in touch, if the spirit moves you. We like hearing from former students and friends.

John Arthur



Alumni



Eric Lobenfeld '71

A '71 graduate who majored in Philosophy, Eric took courses from Professors Preus (Plato & Aristotle), Sinisi (Logic) and Dillon (Existentialism and Phenomenology). Mr. Lobenfeld is now a partner in a very large international law firm, specializing in intellectual property litigation. Philosophy is the best undergraduate degree for a lawyer (no PPL program at that time). He now serves on the Board of the Harpur Law Alumni Council.

Howie Kurlender '82

Upon completing coursework at Binghamton, Howie was accepted to the graduate program at SUNY Albany and received a Master's in Philosophy ('84). From there he sought a career in technology, one factor being the relationship between computing and Philosophy, i.e. thinking machines, logical analysis of language, etc. He has spent the last 15 years on the technical side of the software business.

Laurie Arias (formerly Quinlan) '99

Laurie is an 8th grade math teacher along with her husband, in Plainfield, NJ. In September 2004 she began teaching at Kittatinny Regional High School in Newton, NJ, where she and her husband started their 4th year as math teachers. They married in July 2002 and enjoy traveling cross-country via Jeep, and also internationally.

Jonathan Gelling '04

Jonathan enjoyed the issues raised in the Just War Theory seminar, and hopes Professor Bar On continues to teach it in the future. "There is so much talent in the Philosophy Department, from Professor Knapp's frightening ability to manufacture a hypothetical to prove almost any point, to Professor Arthur's strength in holding together a lecture hall discussion with 200 students, to Professor Dillon's talent in making existentialism seem fun. I have greatly enjoyed my two years here, and leave only with the regret that I didn't come here initially, as opposed to going to Stony Brook to pursue a computer science degree." He is currently attending Vanderbilt Law on a half scholarship, and will be taking many of the strengths in moral reasoning and analytical writing he's learned at Binghamton University with him.

The Binghamton University Alumni Career Network

The **Alumni Career Network** is a searchable database of Binghamton alumni who have volunteered to be contacted by current students and alumni regarding career information. There are currently 47 Philosophy majors and 48 Philosophy, Politics and Law (PPL) or Law and Society (which is what PPL used to be) majors who are part of this network. If you are a current Philosophy or PPL major, consider using the network to identify alumni who have volunteered to be there to give you information. They can be identified by profession, employer, location, major or graduate institution. If you are a Philosophy or PPL alumni, consider becoming part of the Alumni Career Network. To use the network go to <https://www.bconnectalumni.binghamton.edu>.

If you want to contact the alumni office directly, you can email alumni@binghamton.edu or call 607-777-2431.



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Money Matters

I would like to begin by thanking those of you who sent us donations. They were a wonderful surprise and we will be putting the money to the designated uses and, where appropriate, to general use.

Receiving the donations felt like the Department of Philosophy is actually beginning on a good footing with its effort to build a fund of its own in order to supplement its budgetary allocations in all areas. There are many projects that will be supported by your contributions and if you want, you can designate a specific project that you wish your contribution to support. Among the less ambitious projects is of course the *Newsletter*, which needs support for its publication in snail-mail version. Another not too ambitious project is the formation of a Department Prize that will be given to the year's graduating seniors who achieve Honors in Philosophy. A prize of this sort will add to the recognition of the honor students and as an alumnae prize will be very special for them. An alternative to the alumnae prize is the alumnae scholarship that can be given to a Philosophy major in their senior year. There are other more ambitious projects and I will be happy to discuss small and large projects alike with anyone interested in exploring donations to the Department. I am aware that this is a wish list. Please help us make it come true.

All donations small and large are welcome. You can send your contribution to the Department of Philosophy, Binghamton University (SUNY), Binghamton NY 13902-6005. You can donate online by going to <http://giveto.binghamton.edu> (click on the **GIVE NOW** button on the left, in the form that opens under school/unit, choose "Other" and enter Philosophy or PPL (Philosophy, Politics and Law) as the designated program and just fill in the rest of the form).

We are starting a memorial fund in Professor Martin (Mike) Dillon's name. It is dedicated to undergraduate students. We have already received contributions to this fund for which we are thankful and are looking for more in order to reach the goal of an endowment of at least fifteen thousand dollars. To donate to the memorial fund, you can again donate online at <http://giveto.binghamton.edu>, (click on **GIVE NOW**, select Harpur as the designated school/unit, select the "Other" restriction from the drop-down choices and then type "Martin Dillon Memorial Fund" in the text box field used for "Other." You can also make checks payable to Binghamton University Foundation and specify that the funds are for the Mike Dillon Memorial Fund and send to Binghamton University Foundation, Box 6005, Binghamton University, Binghamton, NY 13902-6005.

Feel free to get in touch with me to discuss contributions by calling 607-777-6198 or sending an e-mail to me at ami@binghamton.edu.

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